

for he hadde founde a corn, lay in the yerd.
Roial he was, he was namore aferd;
He fethered Pertelote twenty tyme,
And trad as ofte, er that it was pryde.
He looketh as it were a grym leoun;
And on his toos he rometh up and doun,
Hym deigned nat to sette his foot to grounde.
He chuketh, whan he bath a corn yfounde,
And to hym rennen thanne his wyves alle.
Thus roial, as a prince is in an halle,
Leve I this Chauntecleere in his pasture;
And after wol I telle his aventure.

AN that the monthe in which the world
bigan,
That highte March, whan God first
maked man,
Was compleet, and ypassed were also,
Syn March bigan, thrity dayes and two,
Bifel that Chauntecleer, in al his pryde,
His sevene wyves walkyng by his syde,
Caste up his eyen to the brighte sonne,
That in the signe of Taurus hadde yronne
Twenty degrees and oon, and somewhat moore;
And knew by kynde, and by noon oother loore,
That it was pryde, and crew with blisful stevene.
The sonne, he seyde, is clomben up on hevne
Fourty degrees and oon, and moore, ywis.
Madame Pertelote, my worldes blis,
Herkeneth this blisful briddes how they synge,
And se the freshe floures how they sprynge;
ful is myn herte of revel and solas.
But sodeynly hym fil a sorweful cas;
for evere the latter ende of joy is wo.
God woot that worldly joye is soone ago;
And if a rethor koude myghte it write,
He in a cronique sauflly myghte it write,
As for a sovereyn notabilitee.
Now every wys man, lat him herkne me;
This storie is also trewe, I undertake,
As is the book of Launcelot de Lake
That wommen holde in ful greet reverence.
Now wol I come agayn to my sentence.

A COLFOX, ful of sly iniquitee,
That in the grove hadde woned yeres
three,
By heigh ymaginacioun forncast,
The same nyght thurghout the heggas brast
Into the yerd, ther Chauntecleer the faire
Was wont, and eek his wyves, to repaire;
And in a bed of wortes stille he lay,
Til it was passed undren of the day,
Waityng his tyme on Chauntecleer to falle;
As gladly doon this homycides alle,
That in await liggen to mordre men.
O false mordreour, lurkyng in thy den!
O newe Scariot, newe Genyloun!
false dissimylour, O Grek Synoun,
That broghtest Troye al outrely to sorwe!
O Chauntecleer, acursed be that morwe,
That thou into that yerd flaugh fro the bemes!
Thou were ful wel ywarned by thy dremes,
That thilke day was perilous to thee.
But what that God forwoot moot nedes bee,

After the opinioun of certein clerkis,
Witnessse on hym, that any parfit clerk is,
That in scole is greet alteracioun
In this mateere, and greet disputacioun,
And hath ben of an hundred thousand men.
But I ne kan nat bulle it to the bren,
As kan the hooly doctour Augustyn,
Or Boece, or the bisshope Bradwardyn,
Whether that Goddes worthy forwityng
Streyneth me nedefully to doon a thyng,
Nedely clepe I symple necessitee,
Or elles, if free choys be graunted me
To do that same thyng, or do it noght,
Though God forwoot it, er that it was wroght;
Or if his wityng streyneth never a deel
But by necessitee condiciounel.
I wil nat han to do of swich mateere;
My tale is of a cok, as ye may heere,
That took his conseil of his wyf, with sorwe,
To walken in the yerd upon that morwe
That he hadde met that drem that I of tolde.

WOMMENNES conseil been ful of te colde;
And made Adam fro Paradys to go,
Theras he was ful myrie and wel at ese;
But, for I noot to whom it myght displese
If I conseil of wommen wolde blame,
Passe over, for I seyde it in my game.
Rede auctours where they trete of swich mateere,
And what they seyn of wommen ye may heere.
Thise been the cokkes wordes, and nat myne;
I kan noon harm of no woman divyne.

HIRE in the soond, to bathe hire myrily,
Lith Pertelote, and alle hire sustres by,
Agayn the sonne; and Chauntecleer so fre
Soong murier than the mermayde in the see;
for Phisilogus seith sikerly,
How that they synngen wel and myrily.
And so bifel that, as he cast his eye,
Among the wortes, on a boterflye,
He was war of this fox that lay ful lowe.
Nothyng ne liste hym thanne for to crowe,
But cride anon, Cok, cok! and up he sterte,
As man that was affrayed in his herte;
for naturelly a beest desireth flee
fro his contrarie, if he may it see,
Though he never erst hadde seyn it with his eye.
This Chauntecleer, whan he gan hym espye,
He wolde han fled, but that the fox anon
Seyde, Gentil sire, alas! wher wol ye gon?
Be ye affrayed of me that am youre freend?
Now certes, I were worse than a feend,
If I to yow wolde harm or vileynye.
I am nat come your conseil for tespye;
But trewely, the cause of my comyng
Was oonly for to herkne how that ye synge;
for trewely, ye have as myrie a stevene
As any angel hath that is in hevne.
Therwith ye han in musyk moore feelyng
Than hadde Boece, or any that kan synge.
My lord youre fader, God his soule blesse!
And eek youre mooder, of hire gentillesse,
Han in myn hous ybeen to my greet ese,

And certes, sire, ful fayn wolde I yow plese.
But for men speke of synnyng, I wol seye,
So moote I brouke wel myne eyen tweye,
Save yow, I herde nevere man yet synge
As dide youre fader in the morwennyng.
Certes, it was of herte, al that he song;
And for to make his voys the moore strong,
He wolde so peyne hym that with bothe his eyen
He mooste wynke, so loude he wolde cryen,
And stonden on his tiptoon therwithal,
And strecche forth his nekke, long and smal.
And eek he was of swich discrecioun,
That ther nas no man in no regioun
That hym in song or wisdom myghte passe.
I have wel rad in Daun Burnel the Asse,
Among his vers, how that ther was a cok
for that a preestes sone yaf hym a knok
Upon his leg, whil he was yong and nyce,
He made hym for to lese his benefice;
But certeyn, ther nys no comparisoun
Bitwixe the wisdom and discrecioun
Of youre fader, and of his subtiltee.
Now syngeth, sire, for seinte charitee;
Lat se, konne ye youre fader countrefete.

HIS Chauntecleer his traysoun nat espie,
So was he ravysshed with his flaterie.
Alas, ye lordes, many a fals flatour
Is in youre courtes, and many a losengeour,
That plesen yow yet more, by my feith,
Than he that soothfastnesse unto yow seith.
Redeth Ecclesiaste of flaterie;
Beth war, ye lordes, of hir trecherye.
This Chauntecleer stood hye upon his toos,
Strecchyng his nekke, and heeld his eyen cloos,
And gan to crowe loude for the nones;
And daun Russell, the fox, sterte up atones
And by the gargat hente Chauntecleer,
And on his bak toward the wode hym beer,
for yet ne was ther no man that hym sewed.

DESTINEE, that mayst nat been
eschewed!
Alas, that Chauntecleer fleigh fro
the bemes!
Alas, his wyf ne roghte nat of
dremes!
And on a friday fil al this meschaunce.
O Venus, that art goddesse of plesaunce,
Syn that thy servant was this Chauntecleer,
And in thy servyce dide al his power,
Moore for delit, than world to multiplie,
Why woldestow suffre hym on thy day to dye?
O Gaufred, deere maister soverayn,
That, whan thy worthy kyng Richard was slayn
With shot, compleynedest his deeth so soore!
Why ne hadde I now thy sentence, and thy loore,
The friday for to chide, as diden ye?
for on a friday, soothly, slayn was he.
Channe wolde I shewe yow how that I koude
pleyne
for Chauntecleres drede, and for his peyne.
Certes, swich cry ne lamentacioun
Was nevere of ladyes maad, whan Ylioun

Was wonne, and Pirrus, with his streite sward,
Whan he hadde hent kyng Priam by the berd,
And slayn hym, as seith us Eneydos,
As maden alle the hennies in the clos,
Whan they had seyn of Chauntecleer the sighte.
But sovereynly dame Pertelote shrighte,
ful louder than dide Hasdrubales wyf,
Whan that hir housbonde hadde lost his lyf,
And that the Romayns hadde brend Cartage;
She was so ful of torment and of rage,
That wilfully into the fyr she sterte,
And brende herselfen with a stedefast herte.

WOFUL hennies, right so criden ye,
As, whan that Nero brende the citee
Of Rome, cryden the senatours wyves,
for that hir husbondes losten alle hir lyves;
Withouten gilt this Nero hath hem slayn.
Now wole I turne to my tale agayn:

HIS sely wydwe, and eek hir doghtres two,
Herden thise hennies crie and maken wo,
And out at dores sterten they anon,
And syen the fox toward the grove gon,
And bar upon his bak the cok away,
And cryden, Out! harrow! and weylaway!
Ha! ha! the fox! and after hym they ran,
And eek with staves many another man;
Ran Colle, oure dogge, and Talbot, and Gerland,
And Malkyn, with a dystaf in hir hand;
Ran cow and calf, and eek the verray hogges,
forfered for the berkyng of the dogges,
And shoutyng of the men and wommen eek;
They ronned so, hem thoughte hir herte brek.
They yelleden, as feendes doon in helle;
The dokes cryden, as men wolde hem quelle;
The gees, for feere, flownen over the trees;
Out of the hyve cam the swarm of bees;
So hydous was the noyse, a! benedicitee!
Certes, he Jakke Straw, and his meynec,
Ne made nevere shoutes half so shrille,
Whan that they wolden any flemmyng kille,
As thilke day was maad upon the fox.
Of bras they broghten bemes, and of box,
Of horn, of boon, in whiche they blewe & powped,
And therewithal they shrieked and they howped;
It semed as that hevne sholde falle.

OW, goode men, I pray yow herkneth
alle;
Lo, how fortune turneth sodeynly
The hope & pryde eek of hir enemy!
This cok, that lay upon the foxes bak,
In al his drede unto the fox he spak,
And seyde, Sire, if that I were as ye,
Yet wolde I seyn, as wys God helpe me,
Turneth agayn, ye proude cherles alle!
A verray pestilence upon yow falle;
Now am I come unto the wodes syde,
Maugree youre heed, the cok shal heere abyde;
I wol hym ete, in feith, and that anon!
The fox answerde, In feith, it shal be don,
And as he spak that word, al sodeynly
This cok brak from his mouth delyverly
And heighe upon a tree he fleigh anon.
And whan the fox saugh that he was ygon,